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A vindication - 1852

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By Exchange





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A
VINDICATION
OF THE
DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS
OF
NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING
OF FRIENDS.



A
VINDICATION
OF THE
DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS
OF
NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING
OF FRIENDS.

BY THE MEETING FOR SUFFERINGS.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF DANRELL & MOORE.
1852.

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VINDICATION.

It is now more than six years since a comparatively small portion of the former members of New England Yearly Meeting separated themselves from Friends, and set up Meetings under the names of Yearly and other Disciplinary Meetings of our Society.

At the time, our Yearly Meeting, under the apprehension of the propriety and necessity of such a measure, prepared, and issued in print, a narrative of facts and circumstances which, in their belief, had tended to produce that secession. At the same time, they also issued and published a declaration of their faith in the ancient doctrines and principles of the Society.

The object the Yearly Meeting had in view in these publications was, that our members within our own borders, as well as Friends generally in other Yearly Meetings, might be in possession of correct information as to the true causes which had operated to produce a result so much to be regretted as a secession from the government and meetings of Friends, under the profession of holding to the faith, and supporting the discipline of the Society.

The narrative was not addressed to any Meeting of Friends ;

and it may well be concluded that it was not in the contemplation of the Yearly Meeting, that its contents would come under the consideration of the other Yearly Meetings, so as to be made the occasion of an inquiry by other Yearly Meetings into the propriety or regularity of the disciplinary proceedings of our Yearly Meeting, or its subordinate branches.

Our Yearly Meeting could have had no view or expectation of this kind, as we believe no such measure had ever taken place in our religious society since we have been a distinct people. Nor is such a course pointed out or authorized by any provision of discipline, so far as we know, in the Society in any part of the world.

That "each Yearly Meeting is the judge of its own discipline,"* is a fundamental principle, we believe, universally acknowledged, and heretofore as universally adhered to. Indeed, it seems to us that any departure from this principle must necessarily involve consequences totally subversive of the order and discipline of the Society.

If one Yearly Meeting may inquire into the propriety and regularity of the proceedings of Monthly and Quarterly Meetings belonging to another Yearly Meeting, such meetings must of necessity be amenable to the Yearly Meeting thus making the inquiry; and must have the right of being heard by them, and making their defence; and such examining Yearly Meeting must possess the right to call upon them, as well as upon all interested, whether meetings or individuals, for explanation and defence, and should have the means of carrying out their decisions.

The inconsistency of this course with the order in which the discipline of the Society has ever been administered, must be apparent to all acquainted with the system of church government of our religious body.

* Philadelphia Report, p. 29.

Since the publication of the narrative, several pamphlets have been circulated among us, and probably among Friends in other Yearly Meetings and the public at large, in which the proceedings of this Yearly Meeting and several of its subordinate branches have been much misrepresented; and the character and religious standing of many Friends seriously attacked,—and the attempt made to represent our Yearly Meeting as having departed from the doctrines and practice of Friends,—and to have become an apostate body.

These publications purport, in most cases, to proceed from meetings of the Separatists, and to have received their sanction. Some others have been published anonymously.

It has been heretofore believed best by Friends, silently to bear the imputations contained in these publications,—emanating, as they did, from those who had openly seceded; or from nameless sources.

It cannot be doubted that the blessed end and intent of a gracious Providence in raising up and separating us as a distinct people, to show forth the praise of His name and become a lively example of the fruits of His Spirit will ever be best promoted by a steady and upright walking before the Lord, and by a patient endurance of the dispensations in unerring wisdom permitted for the trial of the faith of the members of His church.

It is a prophetic testimony that “it is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the Salvation of the Lord.” Meekness and quietness of spirit are testified in the Scriptures to be the adorning of the followers of the Lamb. In this spirit, we have desired to be preserved; and in this spirit, we crave that all we do, for the cause of truth may be done.

In the year 1849, a publication of a different character from those we have alluded to appeared among us, and has gained much circulation.

It is entitled “A Report of the Meeting for Sufferings adopt-

ed by a Yearly Meeting of Friends, held in Philadelphia, in relation to the facts and causes of the division which occurred in New England Yearly Meeting, in the year 1845."

By a minute appended to this "Report," and published with it, it appears that it has received the official sanction of the Yearly Meeting held in Philadelphia—a Yearly Meeting with which that of New England has been in unity since its establishment now for near two hundred years; and by another minute published in the same pamphlet, the printing and circulation of it appear to be the work of those who separated from New England Yearly Meeting in 1845.

It is not, therefore, simply as a production of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting that we reply to it, but as a publication extensively circulated in print reflecting upon the disciplinary proceedings of our Yearly Meeting that we believe ourselves called upon thus publicly to take notice of it.*

Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting cannot, as we think, fail to see that under the circumstances, our vindication, to answer our intended purpose, must take as wide a circulation

* The "Report" has further been made use of on an important occasion, by being presented to the consideration of the Supreme Judicial Court of the State of Massachusetts.

Thomas B. Gould, to whom the "Report" officially authenticated, was sent by direction of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting as Clerk of one of the bodies claiming to be New England Yearly Meeting, having given his deposition to be used in the proceedings before that Court, arising out of a suit at law, brought by the Separatists against Friends of Swansey Monthly Meeting, has annexed a copy of the same to his deposition, and testified that he "has carefully compared the copy so annexed with the original document in his possession"—and refers to it for a further and particular statement of the causes which have led to and produced the division in New England Yearly Meeting.

Thus the document, in what the Separatists consider an official form, has been laid before the highest judicial tribunal of Massachusetts, as evidence against Friends.

as the strictures it is intended to counteract, and that a resort to that confidential intercourse which has for so long a time subsisted between that Yearly Meeting and ours is not now sufficient to meet the exigencies of the case. .

We can hardly believe that our dear friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, had any view of this paper ever being put in print or circulated in our borders. It seems to us that they could not have failed to see that the tendency of such a publication would be to give strength to that spirit of controversy and alienation which has, for many years, unhappily existed with some of our former members; and of renewing in their minds those feelings so foreign to true love and unity which Friends have had so deeply to deplore.

The hope had been cherished that the restoring influence of the blessed love of the Gospel, the healing virtue of the grace of God, would, ere now, have led them to look back towards that precious unity and fellowship, which, in times past, we had been so graciously favored with; and it cannot but be apparent to the candid and unprejudiced that the manner in which the circumstances which led to the separation are treated of in this publication, is calculated to widen, rather than to heal, the breach the enemy has been permitted to make within our borders.

In the narrative published by our Yearly Meeting in 1845,—and which is reviewed in the “Report” under consideration,—the apprehension and belief of Friends are expressed, that the cause of disunity and schism is to be found in the fostering, “under the profession of supporting sound doctrines,” of a spirit of disaffection towards Friends, which led to the indulgence “in a spirit of detraction, tending to injure the religious character of divers Friends in our own, and other Yearly Meetings,—representing them as unsound in doctrine, and holding views inconsistent with those always held by the Society of Friends.”

At the time our Yearly Meeting expressed this apprehension, there had nothing appeared in print, so far as we recollect, which gave proof of the great prevalence of this spirit; but since that time, the Separatists themselves have furnished ample proof that the apprehensions of Friends were well founded; and that the spirit of disaffection was more deep-rooted and settled than they, at that time, supposed.

In proof of this, we may quote from a pamphlet entitled, "An Address from Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting of Friends, to the Members of that Religious Society within the limits of New England Yearly Meeting, and elsewhere:"—signed by Thomas Wilbur and Martha S. Gould as Clerks,—published in 1845. A publication of the Separatists, as follows: (page 5.)

"With regard to the *cause* of this schism, *we* do not merely 'apprehend,' but are sure it will be found to have originated in a departure from the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ—from an humble inward dependence upon the guidance of His good Spirit and Power, which would have preserved those who have taken the oversight of the flock, from lording it over the heritage—from seeking honor one of another—from bringing in strange doctrines themselves, or 'bidding those God-speed' who did so."

We farther quote from page 12:—

"It is well known to many Friends who live in remote parts of New England Yearly Meeting, that a few prominent individuals in Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting have for many years very much controlled its proceedings; to the dissatisfaction of those Friends, which dissatisfaction has been by them repeatedly expressed. As a necessary consequence of a departure in principle, the love of power has increased, and being in a manner self-constituted and self-perpetuated, its growth has been rapid and alarming, and has aided in no small degree in bringing about these sad results—long foreseen by many deeply-exercised and concerned Friends, and now but too painfully and sorrowfully apparent to all.

"It has also been evident that some in the possession of great wealth, have been, on that account, far too influential in the Church, being looked up to, and promoted to important stations therein, with too little regard to

religious weight of character, which it is to be feared has been much wanting in some cases."

From the same pamphlet, (page 13,) we quote farther:—

"Many of the prominent individuals before alluded to, did earnestly defend and support that great apostate Elisha Bates, at the time of his last attendance of this Yearly Meeting in 1835, notwithstanding he therein repeatedly manifested his dereliction from some of our peculiar principles and testimonies. Such, his departure, was testified against by some of us, in a manner similar to that which we afterward manifested when his successor J. J. Gurney, appeared, and to the incurring of the like censure and reproaches, from which E. Bates's subsequent precipitancy only relieved us. So that it is indisputable, those prominent individuals were in some degree at least *prepared* to receive J. J. Gurney, and to support and defend him, inasmuch as this was not their *first* committal to those who held and promulgated unsound doctrines."

And further, on page 14, speaking of the circular of the Meeting for Sufferings referring to the care of Friends to hold up to view those Gospel truths in which they believe, and to caution Friends against giving countenance to the receiving or spreading of unsound doctrines, the pamphlet says:—

"To those who have been acquainted with the course which these men have pursued for the last six or eight years, their own conduct must form the most striking comment upon these 'solemn' declarations, exhortations, and advices."

And further, on page 15, speaking of the Meeting for Sufferings and Yearly Meeting's Committee, the pamphlet says:—

"For these are the men—these prominent and influential men, who have combined together against the Lord and his anointed messengers—even to the effecting of the *disownment* in some instances of faithful standard-bearers and unslumbering watchmen, who 'could not hold their peace,' and that too in a way and manner contrary to and subversive of that excellent system of church discipline which was originally established

by the power and in the wisdom of truth, not for the protection of 'evil men and seducers,' that *they* might go on with impunity 'deceiving and being deceived;' but to be so faithfully administered upon them as either to reclaim, or cut them off from membership in that body which is composed of living members, so long as it holds the indispensable connexion with Christ, the Head over *all things* to his own church and people."

"But we can readily understand and appreciate the object of all these high professions; the more reiterated of latter time as their fears increase, yet so contradicted by their conduct; for it has been behind this screen and under this blind, that their unsanctified work has been performed; well knowing how 'vain it is to lay the snare in the sight of any bird.'"

And again, we quote from page 24 of the same pamphlet:—

"The writers of these documents—the members of the Meeting for Sufferings, also know that we have patiently *submitted to their arbitrary 'control,'* for several years past, involving *many* and 'various steps' which they 'have taken,' 'under the specious pretence' 'of supporting right order in the Church,' but which were palpably 'at variance with our Christian discipline,' subversive of *the order prescribed therein,* for the government of meetings, and the preservation of their rights, as well as of the rights of individuals; and incompatible with the precepts of Christ, 'the alone Head,'" &c.

Referring to a book published by John Wilbur, entitled a "Narrative and Exposition," &c., the pamphlet asserts, page 28, that

That book "will clearly show that 'this division in Society *has arisen* from a defection' on the part of the Meeting for Sufferings, the Yearly Meeting's Committee, and some others, 'on points of doctrine' of primary and distinguishing importance—that *doctrines* have 'been at issue in the case,' from the beginning even until now—that *there has been* a change, and a *very serious and lamentable change too,* in the views of those, who say they 'know of no change,' in regard to the ancient *doctrines, discipline, and practice* of our religious society."

"Greater evidence need not be called for, to prove the insincerity of the professions of the Meeting for Sufferings, in now coming forward publicly

and avowing the primitive doctrines of Friends, than the course of proceedings which they have followed."

In the same year, 1845, was published another pamphlet, emanating from the Separatists, and under the sanction of their Yearly Meeting, entitled "An Epistolary Declaration and Testimony of the Yearly Meeting of Friends, for New England, held on Rhode Island in the 6th mo., 1845," and signed by "Thomas B. Gould and Martha S. Gould, Clerks."

In this pamphlet are contained extracts from the minutes of said Yearly Meeting of Separatists—and therefore to be considered as the conclusions and assertions of them as a body,—in which they say, p. 6, that,

"Having assembled under circumstances very peculiar and painful, it has appeared to us important, briefly to set forth and to place upon our Records, some of those causes which produced a division in Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting and its subordinate branches, during the past year, and which resulted in a fearful schism in the early part of this Yearly Meeting, &c."—And proceeding to detail these causes, they say that, "For several years past many of the most prominent and influential members of this Yearly Meeting, who had formerly appeared to be in good measure established in the Truth, but who, for want of an humble abidance therein, which would have preserved them out of all error, have fallen from that state and standing which they once knew, and have manifested a sorrowful disposition to lower the standard of our Christian profession, by introducing and conniving at the introduction of doctrines, principles, and practices at variance with and subversive of those which have ever distinguished us as a people, as set forth in the standard writings of our early Friends, particularly in Robert Barclay's 'Apology for the true Christian Divinity,' which has been fully approved and adopted, not only by this Meeting, but by the Society at large."

"In order the more easily to effect a change in our well-known principles, corresponding with that which had taken place in themselves, they have not hesitated to lay waste the good order and discipline of the Church—making use of the station and influence which they had improperly retained in the Society, and of a profession of great concern for the maintenance of *its order* to conceal their secret defection in principle,

and to gloss over their proceedings, which were designed to 'hurt and destroy' those who could not be induced to unite with them in removing the 'ancient landmarks' of our Christian profession, or to refrain from bearing testimony to the truth as always held and supported by Friends, and as enjoined by our Discipline."

"Seeming to depend very much upon their numerical strength, many and various have been the artifices to which they have resorted, to increase and perpetuate their own power and numbers. They have been unwearied in raising and spreading unfounded prejudices and evil reports, against those Friends (both at home and abroad,) who firmly opposed these innovations, some of whom in this way, they succeeded in laying under dealing and disowning."

Allusion is made in one of the above extracts to a book published by John Wilbur, under the name of a "Narrative and Exposition." This book of John Wilbur appears also to have been endorsed by the Meeting of the Separatists, calling themselves the Meeting for Sufferings, as appears by their minute under date of 6th of 8th mo., 1845, appended to a publication of theirs, called 'Strictures, &c.,' in which they say that "the merits of the controversy have been clearly set forth in this book." To show that this individual fully sympathized and united with the spirit manifested in the above extracts,—we quote from his Narrative and Exposition, as follows, p. 33 :—

"The above named J. J. Gurney, on a visit to America, came to New England, in the 6th mo., 1838, and found the ground already prepared in many minds to receive and defend him, notwithstanding the defection of his doctrines."

"These persons whose minds had been thus prepared, had evidently been for some years seeking for the control and dominion over New England Yearly Meeting, and over all its concerns, in which they had been successful. And being men of influence, and disposed to avail themselves of all means within their reach, (which were not in any wise very limited,) whereby to clothe themselves with rule and with power—have drawn many to them, or after, them by their proffered friendship—by promotion in appointments—by the honor of man, and by temporal favors, bestowed in many ways. By these means they have encompassed (however unus-

pected their object by many) a great proportion of those who were active members, as well as others, and have promoted and made active, many who were not so before. And those who have not fallen into these new views, have not been desirous of office or control in the church, and consequently have not put themselves or one another forward much for appointments."

From the foregoing extracts, we think it will fully appear, that a spirit of disaffection and alienation of mind from the body of Friends, a jealous disposition towards them, and a great lack of that love and unity, which, in accordance with the precepts of the Gospel of Christ, our discipline enjoins,—had existed with those who separated from us, *for many years*. That, through the subtle working of the adversary of our peace, a sad breach had been made in the harmony and love which are the essential badge of true discipleship.

Under such a state of things, it was perfectly clear, that all who desired the peace and prosperity of the Society—all to whom the precious cause of truth was dear, were bound to labor for the removal of such spots and blemishes upon our Christian profession.

By the discipline of our Yearly Meeting, as well as by the constitution of that body, and its place and office in the church, it therefore became imperative to pursue this labor. The very design of the Yearly Meeting required it.

In the description of that order established in the truth of Meetings for discipline, the purposes of the Yearly Meeting are thus set forth in the book of Discipline:—"Yearly (Meeting) consisting of all the Quarterly Meetings in New England, to meet annually in the sixth month, on Rhode Island, for a great and weighty oversight and Christian care of the affairs of the Churches, pertaining to our holy profession and Christian Communion; that good order, true love, unity and concord, may be faithfully followed and maintained among all of us as a peculiar people, called and chosen out of the world, and the errors and tions thereof."

Our Yearly Meeting entered into this arduous labor,—they issued advices, persuading and enjoining Friends to live in love, to preserve harmony, to give no place to discord and contention, —to labor for the “unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” And, from time to time, they deputed Committees of concerned Friends to labor for the same blessed end.

But, we have sorrowfully to testify, that these labors of love were not received, by some, in the spirit in which they were tendered. For want of an humble abidance in the truth, many were disposed to reject the tender counsels of the body thus extended to them; and the consequences which followed, in many cases, were such as are described by Robert Barclay in his treatise on Church Government, Vol. I, Barclay’s Works, pp. 467, 468: “Now the ground of all schisms, divisions or rents in the body is, when as any member assumes another place than is allotted it; or being gone from the life and unity of the body, and losing the sense of it, lets in the murmurer, the eye that watches for evil, and not in holy care over its fellow-members, and then, instead of coming down to judgment in itself, will stand up and judge its fellow-members, yea, the whole body or those whom God has set in a more honorable and eminent place in the body than itself. Such suffer not the word of exhortation; and term the reproofs of instruction, (which is the way of life,) imposition and oppression,—and are not aware how far they are in the things they condemn others for; while they spare not to reprove and revile all their fellow-members;—yet if they be but admonished themselves, they cry out as if their great charter of gospel liberty were broken.”

Such was sorrowfully the spirit in which the care, concern and labors of the Yearly Meeting were met.

By the pamphlet, entitled “A Report,” &c., to which we have alluded as having received the sanction of our Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting; some of the labors of Friends under the concern for the remedying of the evils we have alluded to, are animadverted upon.

It is, we trust, in the love of the everlasting Gospel, and with a single eye to the clearing of the truth from all misconception, that we believe ourselves called upon briefly to review some of the positions which are taken in the "Report" respecting the disciplinary proceedings of this Yearly Meeting.

Before doing so, however, we desire to express our great satisfaction,—nay, we may say, we rejoice to find that the many and confident assertions of the Separatists, that Friends of this Yearly Meeting are wanting in a full adherence to those precious doctrines of the Gospel which have ever distinguished the Society of Friends—those most blessed truths which our predecessors were led, by the immediate putting forth of the Holy Spirit, to embrace and advocate, and through great suffering, and the persecutions of a perverse generation, to maintain, have found no place with Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. And that the solemn declaration of faith, issued by our Yearly Meeting in 1845, has not been called in question by that Yearly Meeting.

It seems to us, that if, as we gladly believe, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting and ourselves are united in one faith, and in one hope in the Gospel,—that if no cause of offence on the one side or the other, can arise from any diversity of opinion upon religious truths, we may indulge a strong confidence that, upon no minor points, can any feeling of separation long remain between us.

Can it be that brethren of the same faith, members of one household, acknowledging the same standards of Doctrine, and led thereby into the support of the same testimonies, can be separated by any feeling of distrust or difference, in administration?

It is with these feelings and views, that we proceed to consider the "Report" which they have sanctioned.

We have no desire, in doing so, to attempt a justification of any proceedings animadverted upon, farther than the truth

requires at our hands ; but we believe it right to bring to view the tried and straightened condition in which this Yearly Meeting was placed when the proceedings in question commenced.

All who have thus far perused this paper, will, we think, be ready to acknowledge, that Friends of our Yearly Meeting had abundant cause of concern and anxiety from the want of unity evidenced by the charges which had been, for so long a time, and so freely circulated amongst us ; for, although previous to the separation, these charges had been made mostly in oral communication or private correspondence, yet, from the feelings of the disaffected members, as they have now been freely exposed and published, it is easy to see what must have been the state of things amongst us. " Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh ; " and when feelings such as are evinced in the extracts from the publications of the Separatists which we have given, have taken root, and are cherished, what other fruits could be looked for than such as have been brought forth ?—alienation of brother from brother, and friend from friend, until open separation took place.

The Report under review purports to consist,—first, of a " Narrative, embracing the facts in which (as they say) both substantially agree ; " second, of a " Statement of the views taken by the respective parties of those facts and circumstances ; " and, third, of the " Conclusions which we (the authors of the Report) have been led to in the course of the examination,—as to the principles which appear to us involved in these transactions."

With respect to the narrative part of the " Report," we do not feel called upon, or think it necessary to enter into any critical examination of it, at the present time. We may safely say, and we feel much satisfaction in saying, that we do not perceive that any fact which our Yearly Meeting embodied in their narrative, is controverted or denied, although many facts contained therein, which we consider quite material to the right

understanding of the case, are omitted to be noticed in this part of the Report. These facts, we are bound to believe, were not so considered by our Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting; and the responsibility of the omission being with them, and not with us, we are willing there to leave it.

The same remarks may, we think, apply to the second part of the Report,—viz., the “Statement of the views taken by the respective parties of those facts and circumstances.” The principal object Friends of our Yearly Meeting had in view in the compilation of their “Narrative,” was faithfully to record the workings of a spirit of disaffection and disunity, from its appearance among us, till its final consummation in an open separation from our Religious Body; that Friends in other Yearly Meetings, as well as within our own limits, might be ascertained of those facts, and be guarded, so far as the Yearly Meeting was enabled to do it, from a misrepresentation of them.

The views taken of those facts, were such as the Yearly Meeting believed they clearly warranted; and were presented with the sole view of endeavoring to support our Christian order and discipline to the honor of Truth. The statement of these views by our Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting are, in many respects, short of their originals: but, as in the former case, we are disposed to believe, and desire to believe, that the views omitted to be stated—many of which we consider important—were not so considered by them.

It would, we fear, extend our present review to a greater length than would be best, to restate either the narrative of facts, or statement of views contained in the former publications of our Yearly Meeting.

It is sufficient for our present purpose, to refer to the several papers issued by our Yearly Meeting, and the Meeting for Sufferings, in the year 1845,—wherein, the facts and circumstances relating to the separation, with the views of Friends thereon, are fully stated.

With respect to the third division of the "Report," — viz., the conclusions come to by the Meeting for Sufferings, and sanctioned by the Yearly Meeting of Philadelphia, we think it right, under feelings, we trust, of true Christian love, and an earnest desire that the truth, and that alone, should prevail, — to offer, more at large, a statement of our views and conclusions.

Our Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting maintain the principle, "that each Yearly Meeting is the judge of its own discipline."* To this position we cordially assent. It is undoubtedly true and correct; — and, in our judgment, any interference by another Yearly Meeting, or attempt to control its action in these respects, would be an infraction of our established order, and fraught with consequences perilous to the whole brotherhood of Yearly Meetings.

But, says the "Report," "there is an understood and implied necessity of conforming in its (the Yearly Meeting's) decisions to principles of religious duty, and Christian doctrine, of civil liberty, and constitutional right common to us all, and always acknowledged and held as inviolable by us."

So far as our Friends here allude to the maintenance of the doctrines of Truth as professed by the Society, and of religious duty growing out of their faithful maintenance, we also cordially agree,—nay, farther,—we believe that there is not only "an understood and implied necessity," but a solemn obligation arising out of the essential nature of our religious profession and compact to uphold both the doctrines and the testimonies growing out of, and depending upon them, faithfully, and without wavering.

Our worthy predecessors, the early members of our christian body, were led in the ever blessed Truth, and under the enlightening and strengthening influence of the Holy Spirit, to uphold and maintain the primitive doctrines of Divine Revela-

* "Report," p. 29.

tion, with a force, clearness and power which commends itself to every truly humbled and seeking mind,—and their successors in the same fellowship will ever be found holding and maintaining the same blessed doctrines and testimonies.

We hold, also, that there is the same solemn obligation to maintain in its original purity, and on its original principles, the system of Church Government, which by the instrumentality of the same faithful servants in the early times of the Society was established and settled.

But how far the decisions of the Yearly Meeting upon the discipline of the Church may or should conform to the principles of “civil liberty and constitutional right common to us all,” we think very questionable.

By the principles of civil liberty, and of constitutional right, at least, in our own country, all men may worship God, in the manner and form they may judge their own consciences dictate. But a member of our Religious Society, by becoming such, relinquishes this right, and agrees to our mode of worship; and if, in the exercise of his civil liberty and constitutional right, he should adopt any other mode of worship, he would become amenable to the discipline;—and surely it would be no valid plea against the exercise of the discipline, that, by the principles of civil liberty and constitutional right he might choose his own form of worship.

Again,—by the principles of “civil liberty and constitutional right,” a man may defend his life, or his possessions, by force of arms;—yet, if a member of our Body were to exercise this liberty, the judgment of the Church must needs be exercised upon him; and it would be no good plea for such a one to make, that such judgment was against the principles of “civil liberty and constitutional right.”

We trust that Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting would agree with us, that the members of our Religious Society are bound by the very terms of their membership to conform to the

principles of our Religious Compact, and to forbear the exercise of all those things, which by the principles of "civil liberty and constitutional right" they may do, which are incompatible with the Truth, as held by us as a people ;—and, that the discipline may be rightfully exercised against all practices inconsistent with the Truth, whether sanctioned by the principles of civil liberty or constitutional right, yea or nay, and that the decisions of the Yearly Meeting should conform to the terms of the compact which lie at the foundation of the union of our religious society.

The sentiment of the "Report," that "we are one people, the world over," is undoubtedly true,—and it is a strengthening and confirming truth, that the influences and teachings of the Holy Spirit should be experienced, to be the same to our fellow professors, the world over,—leading them to see "eye to eye," and cementing them together in the bonds of the Gospel, however widely separated.

But we do not think it follows from this truth, as the "Report" maintains, that when "two Bodies come before a Yearly Meeting, both under the same title, and each claiming to be the co-ordinate branch of the Society bearing that name,"—that it is incumbent for such Yearly Meeting to inquire into the disciplinary proceedings of a co-ordinate Yearly Meeting long established, and always acknowledged.

It seems to us, that if such should be admitted as an established principle of duty, by Yearly Meetings, the final right of appeal, instead of being limited, as heretofore, to the Yearly Meeting of which any appellant might have been, before disownment, a member, would be practically extended to all the other Yearly Meetings, or to any of them which such appellant might choose to select. For he has only, in order to enforce such right, to join with any number of other persons, however small,—for numbers do not vary the principle,—and assuming the name of a Yearly Meeting, to go into any other Yearly Meet-

ing, and demand that they should inquire into the disciplinary proceedings against him, and determine whether the same were right or wrong ;—and they would on the ground assumed in the “ Report,” as it seems to us, be bound so to do, “ so that it may not withhold from those to whom they belong, the precious rights and privileges which membership in our Society confers.”

To this principle thus stated, we do not believe our Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting would adhere,—and yet, we find it difficult, on any other principle, to see what occasion there was for the inquiry into the disciplinary proceedings contained in the Report under review.

This inquiry appears to have led to the conclusion by our Friends, that important principles and usages of the Society, as well as private rights, have been disregarded in the progress of the transactions of New England Yearly Meeting. “ Some of the more prominent points in which this has been done” (the Report says) “ appear to us to be the following :”

The authors of the “ Report” then proceed to specify *eight* particulars, in which they consider important principles and usages of the Society, as well as private rights, have been disregarded by our Yearly Meeting.

And, “*First*, In the attempt to procure the disownment of a minister in the Society upon an accusation of detraction and upon other charges, based upon or growing out of his endeavors, in accordance with what he believed to be his religious duty, to prevent the reception and spread of sentiments contained in printed doctrinal works, written and published by a Friend from England then in this country ; which sentiments, in common with many other Friends, he believed to be opposed to the acknowledged doctrines of the Society.”

Now, it appears perfectly clear to us, that, whether a minister or any other Friend is, or not, guilty of detraction, depends upon whether he makes statements, and spreads reports respecting his fellow-members, or others, designed or calculated to destroy or lower their characters, or to misrepresent their motives ; and that entirely irrespective of the question whether such statements or reports are, or are not, made under a profession of religious duty to prevent the spread of unsound sentiments.

No man has the religious right, under the discipline of our Society, to traduce the character of others, especially of his fellow members, whatever his natural rights may be. No man can, with impunity, in any well-ordered body connected with us as a religious society, make and spread the statements that "the most prominent and influential members of this (his own) Yearly Meeting, who had formerly appeared to be in good measure established in the truth, but who, for want of an humble abidance therein, which would have preserved them out of all error, have fallen from that state and standing which they once knew, and have manifested a sorrowful disposition to lower the standard of our Christian profession ;"—or this statement, "That these prominent and influential members have been guilty of 'making use of the station, and influence' which they had improperly retained in the Society, and of a profession of great concern for the maintenance of *its order* to conceal their secret defection in principle, and to gloss over their proceedings, which were designed to 'hurt and destroy' those who could not be induced to unite with them in removing the 'ancient landmarks' of our Christian profession ;"—or this statement,—“ Many and various have been the artifices to which they have resorted to increase and perpetuate their own power and numbers.” These statements have, to be sure, been put in print since the secession ;—but they are in substance the same as were freely circulated by the minister alluded to and his adherents previous to that time.

They evince the spirit by which he and they were actuated, and had been actuated "*for several years.*" They proceed from the same root which led the minister himself to speak freely to a ministering Friend and his companion—strangers in the Yearly Meeting—of the unsoundness of a minister from England; and to state, "that he was and would be supported by your (his own) Yearly Meeting, on account of a like unsoundness of many of its members." And to speak to the same ministering Friend, and his companion of a "controlling influence in New England Yearly Meeting that was not a religious, but a moneyed one,"—that, "if they were not on their guard, they would buy them;"—that "they had already got ——— and ——— from England;"—that other Friends, in good standing, "were once such low, humble-minded Friends,—but they were bought over to the same influence."

We say, that in no well-ordered body of our Religious Society, can any man put forth such statements as these, without becoming amenable to the discipline. Nor can any member who shall indulge in the spirit manifested in such statements remain in unity, or a consistent member.

The Holy Scriptures abound with cautions against the indulgence of a spirit such as is here manifested; and the discipline of our Yearly Meeting is very clear and emphatic in the condemnation thereof, as the following extracts will show:—

"ADVISED to watch against all tale-bearing and defaming Friends or others, or evil-speaking tending thereunto; and shut out all occasions of offences, contentions and divisions, and to put a speedy stop thereto, passing righteous judgment upon all, who appear instruments of divisions, and offences, contrary to that peaceable truth and Gospel we profess to be guided by. Be kind and tender-hearted one to another, earnestly laboring for universal love, union, and peace in our Religious Society."

"But, when any hath received offence from another, let him first speak privately to the party offending, and endeavor reconciliation between themselves, and not to whisper or aggravate matters against one another,

behind their backs, to the making of parties, and the breach wider.”—(1692.)

“Let those just and ancient commands of God be observed, Levit. xix, 16,—‘Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people:’ And Exodus xxiii, 1,—‘Thou shalt not raise a false report.’ In the fear of the Lord stand against all whisperers, backbiters, tale-bearers, defamers, and slanderers, and against all whisperings, backbitings, tale-bearing, reproaching, and slandering, and put a speedy stop thereto as much as in you lies, for such works of darkness and envy tend to division and discord, and the righteous law of God goes against both the authors, fomenters, receivers and encouragers thereof.”—(1695.)

“Be careful to avoid all backbitings, whisperings, and tale-bearings; for ‘the words of a tale-bearer,’ says the wise man, ‘are as wounds,’ Prov. xviii, 3, tending to the defamation and lessening the characters one of another.

“Be not, therefore, like those of whom the prophet complains, ‘Report’ say they ‘and we will report;’ but when you hear a thing tending to the defamation of any, inquire of the reporter, whether he has acquainted the person affected thereby with such report; if not, caution him to forbear spreading the same, lest the reputation of the innocent be injured thereby. Endeavor to put a speedy stop to all such wicked practices, and works of darkness, justly condemnable, not only in the authors but the encouragers thereof. ‘He that worketh deceit,’ says the royal Psalmist, ‘shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.’ Psalm ci, 5, 7.”—(1738.—Discipline of N. E. Yearly Meeting, pp. 33, 34.)

“We tenderly and with earnestness advise all Friends, who travel in the work of the ministry, as well as others, that they not only shut their ears against all private information of persons and things, tending to the defamation of particular persons or families, and to stir up disputes and contentions in meetings for discipline; but also to rebuke and reprove the person or persons, who shall attempt to prejudice their minds with any private information of that nature.”—(1752.—Discipline of New England Yearly Meeting, p. 83.)

With the cautions and injunctions contained in those extracts, as well as with the obligation lying upon every Yearly Meeting of Friends to put them in practice, Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting will without doubt fully agree. They are among the most important which the Society can be called upon

to enforce, and absolutely essential to the preservation of the body as a Christian church,—having the badge of true discipleship,—love one unto another.

We are not disposed, at all, to question the position of the Report, that, “unsound doctrines are to be testified against, and the flock warned of their pernicious influence.” We believe with our Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, that this is a Christian duty. It is, like all other Christian duties, to be performed in a Christian spirit, and under the immediate puttings forth of the spirit of Christ, and in the unity of the body which is the fruit of that spirit. And when so done, there will be no ground for complaining of such labors. “If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, unless he strive lawfully.” 2 Tim. ii, 5.

It is among the subtle snares and devices of the enemy to the peace and prosperity of the church, and its individual members, to seek to beguile the unwary into the belief, that it is in the Lord’s service and of his requiring, to oppose themselves to the order of the truth, and the labor and travel of the body, and thus to introduce disunity and disaffection ; and it matters little under what profession this may be done, so that the evil effects are produced.

But it is, and ever has been, the concern of the faithful laborers in the vineyard of the Lord, to “seek to follow those things that make for peace.” Our worthy Elder, William Penn, in his day, sought earnestly to promote this end. The following extract from a tract of his writing, entitled, “Just Measures,” is pertinent to our present purpose :—

“O Friends,” says he, “let us labor against secret animosities, watchings for evil, detraction, the sin that flung the angels out of their heavenly station ; let us see to our own spirits, how they are, if *meek, lowly, humble, tender*, by which the true and preserving judgment is only known and felt ; or, if not *high, fierce, hard, and prejudiced* ; for a man may come to lose a good frame of spirit upon very trifles. It is not always what the *matter* is the dispute arises upon, but *how far* the thing is *espoused*, and

what place a man suffers it to have in his mind : If jealousy, reputation, revenge, or contradiction, prevail, division must follow : Some are apt to resent things too soon, and carry it too far, even to obstinacy, through the workings of the evil one in a mystery ; so that though the pretence of the quarrel may be some fact or other, yet *that* has the least share oftentimes in the difference, it being inflamed and increased by the mysterious workings of the spirit of strife and variance in the mind.”—*Penn's folio works*, p. 659.

It was, from first to last, the care of Friends, in their labors with the minister alluded to, to state explicitly that they did not treat with him on account of doctrines ; that doctrines were not at issue in the case, but that they treated with him for his want of unity with Friends, and his course in relation to Friends, calculated to create and foster disaffection and disunity, and his statements respecting Friends calculated to lower their religious character and standing. And if, happily, by these labors of love he could have been prevailed upon to conform to their advice, the desolating effects which have followed would probably have been avoided.

This was the earnest desire of Friends ; and, we believe, was what was clearly his duty according to our acknowledged principles.

That deeply tried and exercised worthy in the early period of our Society, Isaac Pennington, clearly states his belief in the duty of submission. From a work written by him, entitled “ Queries concerning Order and Government in the Church of Christ,” we extract the following. (Pennington's Works, Part 1, p. 435.)

“ Now it is also in my heart (for the perfecting of this close) to mention a few things (in the same love and tenderness) which I have found helpful to me towards the preserving of me in unity with the body. Perhaps it may please the Lord to refresh some others by the mention of them, and to make them useful and helpful to them also.

1. “ The first is, the pure fear of the Lord. This poiseth and guardeth the mind, keeping down fleshly confidence and conceitedness (which in

very apt to spring up) making it wary and considerate either of what it receives or reject, of what it practiseth or forbeareth practising, causing it to wait much, try much, and consult much with the Lord, and with his ministers and people, and preserves out of that suddenness and inconsistency of spirit, at which the enemy often enters. For truth is weighty, and will bear trial: and the more it is tried in the balance, the more manifest its nature and ways appear: but the enemies' appearances and likenesses are not so, but their deceit by a thorough trial comes to be made manifest.

2. "The second is, *Humility of Heart*. This is very precious and of a preserving nature. Yea in this state the Lord helpeth and teacheth, and the soul also (in this state) is fit to receive the help and teachings of the Lord. That which is lifted up and conceited (ready to justify its own way, and condemn even the whole body) is neither fit to be taught by the Lord, nor doth the Lord delight (but rather disdain) to teach it. And so not being taught by Him, it must needs be liable to err, yea to hearken to that spirit, whose voice is more pleasing and suitable to the erring mind than the Lord's voice is.

3. "A third great help, which in the tender mercy of the Lord I have had experience of, is, *Sobriety of Judgment*, Not to value or set up mine own judgment, or that which I account the judgment of life in me, above the judgment of others, or that which is indeed life in others. For the Lord hath appeared to others, as well as to me: yea, there are others, who are in the growth of His Truth, and in the purity and dominion of His Life far beyond me. Now for me to set up, or hold forth a sense or judgment of a thing in opposition to them; this is out of the sobriety which is of the truth. Therefore in such cases I am to retire, and fear before the Lord, and wait upon Him for a clear discerning and sense of His Truth, in the unity and demonstration of His Spirit with others, who are of Him and see in Him. And this will prevent the rents, which the want of His sobriety may occasion.

4. "The last thing which I have to mention, is, *tenderness, meekness, coolness, and stillness of spirit*. I wrap up these together, because they are much of a nature, and go much together. These are of an uniting preserving nature. He that differs and divides from the body, cannot be thus: and he that is thus, cannot rend or divide. Thus is the pure heavenly wisdom, which is peaceable and keepeth the peace. But the other wisdom is rough, stiff, hard, clamorous, ready to take offence, ready to give offence; exceeding deep in the justification of itself, exceeding deep in the condemnation of others, and dares (in this temper) appeal to the Lord, as

if it were right in its ways, but wronged by others; as if it did abide in the measure of His Truth and Life, which others are departed from."

"And how can it be otherwise? How can the wrong eye, the wrong spirit, the wrong wisdom, but judge wrong;—justifying the wrong practices, and condemning the right? But such shall find (if they come to the true touchstone even the measure of life indeed) that they are not in the true tenderness, which proceeds from the life, in the true meekness and gentleness, in the true coolness and stillness; but rather in the reasonings, noises, clamors and disturbances which arise from another spirit, mind and nature, than that which is of the Truth.

"And in coming back from this wisdom to the *pure wisdom*, from the pretended measure of life to the *true measure*, and becoming tender, meek, cool and still in it, they shall there feel their error from the spirit and power of the Lord, and therein own their condemnation therefor from Him, and also justify them who have abode in the power, and been guided by the Spirit and pure measure of Life, which is from God and in God, while they have departed from it. For though the spirit of error (wherewith they have been deceived and entangled) hath made them believe, that they have faithfully abode in the principle and doctrine of truth, while others have departed; yet that will soon vanish, as Truth comes again to be felt and heard speak in them, and the measure of life to live again in them, and to redeem them afresh into its holy nature and pure living sense."

If these excellent sentiments had been the ruling motives of the Friend alluded to, it may safely be said that no occasion of an accusation of violation of the discipline would ever have been given by him or sustained against him.

The second particular in which the "Report" maintains, that important principles and usages of the Society, as well as private rights, have been disregarded by New England Yearly Meeting, is specified as follows:—

"*Second.* In a Committee of the Yearly Meeting summoning a member before it to answer certain charges made by it, dealing

with him as an offender, and requiring him to make concessions to them, and endeavoring to induce him to sign a written acknowledgment, drawn up by a part of their own body."

The Committee of the Yearly Meeting to which allusion is here made, was appointed in the 6th mo., 1840, for the purposes specified in the following minute of their appointment, viz. :—

"The following Friends, being named for that service, were appointed to extend a general care on its behalf, for the maintenance of our Christian principles and testimonies, and the preservation of love and unity among our members; and in that ability which may be afforded them, to assist and advise such meetings and members as circumstances may require, and way open for, under the direction of best wisdom: and they were requested to report to this meeting, next year."

That the appointment of this Committee was strictly in accordance with the usage of New England Yearly Meeting, is certain. Similar Committees have been appointed by this Yearly Meeting, from time to time, since 1759, to the time of the separation. In 1759, a Committee was appointed "to review and judge of a case between contending parties." In 1777, a Committee was appointed by the Yearly Meeting "to visit and advise a Monthly Meeting, and such members thereof as they may find necessary." And, in the following year, a Committee was appointed, "to visit a Quarterly and Monthly Meeting, and such members as may appear to them to have been drawn aside from the union and fellowship of the body on account of (an) unhappy matter; and also to visit (an offender) and endeavor in the spirit of love, to restore him to his brethren, and do what in wisdom they may be enabled, to the end that the cause and testimony of truth be maintained and supported.

"And the said Quarterly and Monthly Meetings, as well as particular members, are desired to attend to this meeting's care

herein, and the advice which the said committee may in wisdom and love to the cause of Truth give on this occasion."

In 1782 a Committee was appointed "to visit each Quarterly and Monthly Meeting, and as many preparative Meetings as may fall in their way, or may appear best; and also, such families or individuals as occasion may require, to labor in that ability which truth may afford, for the revival of the spirit of discipline in the minds of our brethren and sisters, and to afford them every assistance, (that) they may be enabled to put the same in practice in the various branches of our Christian testimony, and endeavor for the removal of the many deficiencies mentioned in the answers to the queries; and generally, to promote love and unity throughout the Society."

In 1783 this Committee was continued for similar services.

In 1805 a Committee was appointed "to visit a Quarterly Meeting, and such other branches of that Meeting, and individuals, as they may think best,—and labor in the ability Truth may afford, to remove the difficulties that have obstructed the regular order of Society, and make report to our next Yearly Meeting."

In 1820 a Committee was appointed "to visit a Quarterly Meeting, and such of its Monthly and particular Meetings, and individuals, as way may open for,—therein, to afford such advice and assistance as they may consider best adapted to the objects of their appointment,—and report to their next Yearly Meeting."

In more recent times, the practice indicated in the above extracts has been continued. It is clearly, therefore, in strict conformity to usage, both ancient and modern, for the Yearly Meeting to make appointments of Committees, to advise and labor with both subordinate Meetings and individuals. And it is as clearly in accordance with the principles of discipline which set forth the purposes of the Yearly Meeting "for a great and weighty oversight and Christian care of the affairs of the

Churches pertaining to our holy profession and Christian communion; that good order, true love, unity and concord, may be faithfully maintained among all of us as a peculiar people, called and chosen out of the world and the errors and corruptions thereof."

If, therefore, it be in accordance with the "important principles and usages of the Society" for the Yearly Meeting to appoint such Committees, and charge them with the duty of advising and laboring with both Meetings and individuals, it surely can be no disregard of such important principles and usages, for such Committees to attend to their appointments, and faithfully labor for the upholding of our testimonies, and for the right administration of the discipline.

This is precisely what the Committee of New England Yearly Meeting have done, and all they have done, in the case alluded to.

As to the charge of the Yearly Meeting's Committee requiring the Friend to make concessions to them, and endeavoring to induce him to sign a written acknowledgment, drawn up by a part of their own body, the facts are these:—The Friend had written a letter to a member of a select Quarterly Meeting's Committee, with which that Committee were dissatisfied, as containing passages, which they said appeared to bear upon the doctrinal views of the Quarterly Meeting's Committee. The Friend himself gives the following account of the origin of the paper which the report calls "a written acknowledgment drawn up by a part of their own body." We quote from a book called "A Narrative and Exposition," &c.—by John Wilbur, published 1845, p. 52.

"But to this, J. W. said, as he had heretofore said, that it was not his intention to *charge* the Committee with unsoundness; and if it would give the Committee any satisfaction he was still prepared so to say, [by way of explanation] and as they had asked the question, he would say, that he was as willing to say it in writing as verbally, as it could not then be misconstrued."

And again we quote from the same work of John Wilbur, p. 55.

"Soon after they (the Yearly Meeting's Committee) asked J. W. if he were willing to commit to writing his expressions, that he had no intention of charging the Committee with unsoundness? to which he answered in the affirmative, inasmuch as he had quite a choice that such explanation, if made at all, should be in writing; and proposed, if A. S. had a pencil, that he should sketch it out," (meaning then while we were sitting.)

On this declaration of the Friend, of his willingness to make such explanation, and on this request, made by him to A. S., a paper was drawn up by him, of which the following is a copy :—

"Feelings of uneasiness having rested on the minds of the Select Quarterly Meeting's Committee, in consequence of some expressions contained in a letter written by me to one of their number under date of 5th mo. 30th, 1840, from an apprehension that I meant therein to charge the members of that Committee with holding unsound doctrines, I feel willing to relieve their minds from such apprehension by now saying that it was not my intention to be so understood. And further I am willing to say that I regret that anything was so unguardedly expressed in said letter as to bear the construction that I meant to reflect upon said Committee to the prejudice of their standing in society. And having in said letter attributed to that Committee expressions that they do not own as having been made by them, I am willing to believe that I misunderstood the sentiments they meant to convey; and consequently to withdraw such charges."

This paper he declined to sign.

A Friend writes a letter to his friend, in which the latter thinks he perceives some paragraphs implicating him and other Friends. The writer disavows any intention of making such implications, and expresses his willingness to disavow in writing any intention of doing so. Whereupon, *at his request*, a paper is prepared containing such disavowal, which he then refuses to sign.

This is the transaction which our Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting consider and specify as a disregard on the part of New England Yearly Meeting, of "important principles and usages of our Society, as well as private rights,"—by a Committee of that Yearly Meeting requiring one, with whom they were, according to the "Report," dealing as an offender, to make concessions to them, and "endeavoring to induce him to sign a written acknowledgment, drawn up by a part of their own body."

To us, it seems merely a friendly act of assistance to the writer of the letter, rendered at his express desire, in making an explanation of his meaning which he said was misunderstood, — which explanation he expressed himself willing to make in writing; — and which, it seems to us, every upright-minded man would not only be *willing*, but *desirous*, to make.

Can our Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting seriously consider this transaction one of their reasons for manifesting disunity with the Yearly Meeting of New England?

The *third* disregard of important principles and usages of the Society specified in the "Report," is as follows: —

"*Third.* In the same Committee's drawing up a charge against a member, bringing it immediately before his Monthly Meeting and insisting upon its being recorded on the minutes, against the urgent request of the accused that it should be previously investigated; thereby assuming to itself functions which rightfully belong to the overseers and to the Preparative Meeting."

In the usual course of the administration of the discipline upon offenders, it is undoubtedly true, that the usage of Friends has generally been, — but by no means uniformly so, — for the

notice of the offence to be brought to the Monthly Meeting by the overseers ; and through the Preparative Meeting.

It is unquestionably important, that a charge of delinquency against a member, should never be brought to the Monthly Meeting without investigation, or without previous labor and endeavors to remedy the deficiency, or settle the offence (if it may so be done without harm to the cause,) without the exposure consequent upon disciplinary proceedings in a Monthly Meeting.

But here was a case of general notoriety ;—the person accused had no wish or desire that the acts complained of should be concealed. He *sought* notoriety—he was bearing a public testimony, as he said, against unsound doctrines. His defence was justification,—and the ground of his acquittal by the Committee of seven in the Monthly Meeting, was, not a denial of the acts complained of, but an averment, that those acts were justifiable and right, and the record of his acts upon the books of the Monthly Meeting would in his view of the case, be a record of his faithfulness. No want of investigation can be justly alleged in the case ; it had been thoroughly examined,—first, by a Committee of the Select Quarterly Meeting, and then by a Committee of the Yearly Meeting, and the individual had been labored with, in reference to it for years.

Neither was precedent wanting for the course pursued. In the year 1777, a Committee of the Yearly Meeting addressed the following communication to one of the Monthly Meetings :

“ To the Monthly Meeting of Friends, held at Long Plain, for Sandwich, the 2d day of the 10th mo., 1777. Dear Friends—We being under appointment, by last Yearly Meeting, to visit your Meeting, and such members thereof as might seem necessary, and to give such advice as might seem suitable, respecting Timothy Davis's publishing a pamphlet on taxation, as well as the matter of the pamphlet, do first advise and recommend that each one settle down in close attendance to that Divine and enlightening gift, measurably bestowed on each one of us ; and we

fully believe that therein you will discover that there remains a labor for you yet to do, in order to clear our holy profession and testimony of truth from the suffering and reproach occasioned by said pamphlet, as well as the manner of publishing it; and in that state of humbly waiting on Divine wisdom, we doubt not you will find truth to open the way for further counsel and advice, and friendly admonition to Timothy, and we advise that you fully discharge yourselves therein; and if after all he shall remain inflexible to your labor of love, and cannot be brought to a sight and sense of his missteps, and in Godly sorrow which worketh repentance not to be repented of, give forth a condemnation of said pamphlet, and publish the same as our discipline requires; that you then put the rule of discipline prescribed for obstinate transgressors in execution. But in case you remain divided in sentiment, and there be such among you as shall not conform and submit hereto, our advice is, that you lay the matter before your Quarterly Meeting, in order, that if it cannot be finished by their assistance, they may send the same to our next Yearly Meeting."

"Signed,

BENJAMIN BARNEY, JR.,	JOSHUA FULSOM,
DANIEL NEWHALL,	BENJAMIN BUFFINGTON,
WILLIAM BUFFUM,	GEORGE COMSTOCK."
ABRAHAM DOW,	

Under these circumstances, in the entire absence of any specific provision of the discipline applicable to the case, it cannot be said with propriety, we think, that important principles and usages of the Society were disregarded by the course pursued.

The *fourth* particular in which the Report alleges a disregard of important principles and usages of our Society, is as follows:—

"*Fourth.* In the same Committee's bringing the power and authority of the Yearly Meeting to bear upon the Monthly Meeting, by claiming the right to join the Committee of the latter in treating with the Friend and refusing to him the right of opening and explaining what he alleged to be the ground on which he had acted in the discharge of an apprehended duty."

By referring to the narrative part of the "Report," "embracing," as the authors state, "the facts in which both parties substantially agree,"—we find it stated, that

"In the 7th mo. six of the Yearly Meeting's Committee met the Committee of nine appointed by the Monthly Meeting to attend to the case brought into the Meeting by the Yearly Meeting's Committee. The Yearly Meeting's Committee laid before this Committee of the Monthly Meeting their proof for establishing the correctness of their charge."*

How can it be said in accordance with this statement that the Yearly Meeting's Committee "claimed the right to join the Committee of the Monthly Meeting, in treating with the Friend?" or how can they be said to have disregarded any "important principles and usages of the Society, or private rights?" On the contrary, it seems to us, that if they had failed to furnish proof of the correctness of the representation of the case which they had made to the Monthly Meeting, the Yearly Meeting's Committee would have failed in an important part of their duty, and might have been justly charged with disregarding "private rights," by making representations to the Monthly Meeting, respecting one of its members, of the truth of which, they furnished no evidence.

They objected, to be sure, to an inquiry before the Committee of a Monthly Meeting appointed to treat with an alleged offender, as to the soundness or unsoundness of printed and published works on religious doctrines;—and they objected properly; neither by the discipline nor the usages of the Society, are such Committees constituted judges of such published doctrinal works;—and, in our view, it would be dangerous to the peace and welfare of the Society, that they should be so constituted. It seems to us, that there would be great danger from such a course, that a varying and different standard would

* "Report," p. 7.

prevail in different Monthly Meetings. In New England Yearly Meeting and in all others, a differently constituted body from a Committee of a Monthly Meeting is authorized to pronounce judgment upon publications on the doctrines of Friends.

Finding the Committee of the Monthly Meeting disposed to usurp the place of this body and enter upon this important work for which they were not appointed, and a work which by the discipline they were not authorized to undertake, the Yearly Meeting's Committee bore their testimony against it, by refusing to sanction it by their presence ; thereby maintaining the wholesome restraints of our discipline.

The *fifth* particular in which, according to the "Report," important principles and usages of the Society, as well as private rights, have been disregarded in the proceedings of New England Yearly Meeting, is thus specified :—

"*Fifth.* In the same Committee's objecting at a subsequent Monthly Meeting to the reception and adoption of a Report signed by seven of the Committee who had investigated the case and declared that the charges had not been sustained, while they advised the reading of a report of an opposite character signed by two of the Monthly Meeting's Committee, although it was strongly objected to in the Meeting."

Whether, by thus objecting to the report of the seven,— "important principles and usages of the Society" were disregarded,—or whether, by such a course, such principles and usages were advocated and maintained, must necessarily depend upon the nature of the report itself, and upon what principles and usages that was founded.

The report of the seven to the Monthly Meeting, after stating that they had notified the parties of the time and place of Meet-

ing, (the accused,) and that several of the Yearly Meeting's Committee attended, and were heard upon the several matters contained in the complaint, states their conclusions as follows :—

“ Upon a full and deliberate investigation of the case, our judgment is that the charges against (the Friend accused) have not been sustained; but that his defence is sufficient to exonerate him from the same :—it appearing from the evidence brought before us, that the complaint originated on account of the labors (of the accused,) under an apprehension of his religious duty, and in conformity with our Christian discipline, against the introduction into our Society of defective principles and doctrines, and for the preservation of those ancient testimonies of truth, committed to us as a people. We therefore recommend that the complaint against him be dismissed.”

The complaint upon which this report was made accuses him, among other things, that he had

“ Circulated an anonymous pamphlet which impeached the character of our Society, and in which some of its important doctrines, as exemplified in the religious engagements of some of its faithful ministers, are reproachfully held up to view ;”—that he had “ circulated divers letters, one or more of which appears to have been written in England, and others originating with himself, addressed to different Friends in this country, which were intended to show that the minister thus liberated for religious service, was not in unity with his friends at home, contrary to the long established order of our religious Society, and designed to close his way in the minds of Friends :”—That he had “ indulged in a spirit of detraction, in speaking and writing, by which the religious character of divers Friends in our own and other Yearly Meetings had been much misrepresented ;”—that he had “ made divers assertions tending to induce dissatisfaction among Friends, and with the proceedings of our Yearly Meeting in various particulars, and calculated to produce divisions therein ; and also to disturb the unity of different Yearly Meetings, and to alienate the feelings of their members from each other ;”—that he had written a letter to a member of a Select Quarterly Meeting's Committee, “ in which he made unjust insinuations, and preferred charges against them which they deny in points of fact.”

With respect to these charges, what does the Report to the Monthly Meeting, signed by the seven, find ? Does it find them untrue ? Not at all. The evidence before the Monthly Meeting's Committee, produced by the Committee of the Yearly Meeting, forbids such a conclusion, which among other things was, that he had spoken of the unsoundness of a minister from England ; and that he would be supported by New England Yearly Meeting, on account of a like unsoundness in many of its members. That he had spoken of a controlling influence in New England Yearly Meeting, that was not a religious, but a moneyed one,—and this, to a minister and his companion, strangers in the Yearly Meeting, just entering upon a religious visit within it ;—and further, he stated to the same minister and his companion, that if they were not on their guard, they would buy them,—that they had already got * and * * from England,—that other Friends had been low and humble-minded, but were bought over to the same, (that is, the moneyed influence.)

We say, that the Report of the seven to the Monthly Meeting, does not undertake to state any of these things untrue, but that, in the language of that Report, “his defence was sufficient to exonerate him from the same.” What was this defence ? We quote it from the report of the seven.

“His labors under an apprehension of his religious duty, and in conformity with our Christian discipline, against the introduction into our Society of defective principles and doctrines, and for the preservation of those ancient testimonies of truth, committed to us as a people.”

The doctrine of the Report of the seven, then clearly was, that it was justifiable in a member, to circulate anonymous pamphlets impeaching the character of our Society, and in which its important doctrines are reproachfully held up to view ;—to circulate letters intended to show, that certificates of unity by Meetings, to Friends travelling in the Ministry, had been

ssued, when such unity did not exist,—to indulge in a spirit of detraction by which the religious character of divers Friends had been much misrepresented,—to make assertions tending to induce dissatisfaction among Friends, and with the proceedings of the Yearly Meeting, and calculated to produce divisions therein, and to alienate the feelings of their members from each other. All this was justifiable, if done under the *profession* of labors, under an apprehension of religious duty, and in conformity with our Christian discipline, against the introduction into our Society of defective principles and doctrines, and for the preservation of those ancient testimonies of truth, committed to us as a people.”

It appears to us, that the acts and spirit of which the Friend was accused, and the truth and correctness of which are not denied in the Report of the seven, are entirely inconsistent with religious duty, or our Christian discipline; and it is equally clear that to oppose the reception and adoption of such a report, is supporting, instead of disregarding “important principles and usages of our Society.”

Sixthly—the “Report” specifies as an act of disregard of important principles and usages of the Society as follows:—

“*Sixth*. In the attempt made, first, by the Quarterly Meeting’s Committee and afterwards by the Quarterly Meeting itself, to render null and void the minute of South Kingston Monthly Meeting which accepted the Report in the case of the Friend alluded to, dismissed the charge against him and restored him to all his rights as a member and minister; and in afterwards taking up his case by another monthly meeting on the same charge and there disowning him without even going through the regular course prescribed by the discipline.”

To sustain the position taken here the "Report" states that "it is a great maxim of law and justice, that where a man has been tried and acquitted he cannot be again tried for the same offence." We say it is a maxim of the law that a man cannot be tried a second time after acquittal for the same offence ; but this maxim is founded rather on policy than on justice. Law makers have decided that in civil society, in the administration of criminal jurisprudence, it is politic to provide that an acquittal after a legal and constitutional trial, shall be taken as a presumption of innocence, or in other words that a man shall not be put in jeopardy twice for the same offence. It is a maxim of policy merely ; absolute justice requires that the really innocent should be held innocent, and the really guilty should be so held.

But if we suppose that this maxim of the law is properly applicable to ecclesiastical trials in our Society, that other maxim of the law, inseparable from it, must certainly be recognized with it, namely, that the first trial must be a legal, constitutional and perfect trial—that the tribunal must be a competent one, qualified to try and determine the case, and the proceedings must be free from error, and the judgment rendered in every respect conformably to law ; else it is held in law void, and no bar to a legal trial at a subsequent time.

In this case, first, the competency of the tribunal is impeached, the Quarterly Meeting decided, and there can be no doubt of their right so to decide, that South Kingstown Monthly Meeting were not in a suitable state to conduct the affairs of the Church, in accordance with our Christian discipline, nor consistently with our religious profession, and if so, were not a competent tribunal ; — and second, there was error in the proceedings, inasmuch as the judgment was rendered in direct opposition to the advice of Committees both of the Yearly and Quarterly Meetings appointed to advise and assist that Monthly Meeting. For these and other reasons the proceedings were

annulled by the Quarterly Meeting; and thus, even in the contemplation of the maxim of the law, there was no legal and constitutional trial, and no bar to a subsequent legal trial. It is a matter of common practice for decisions at law to be set aside and new trials granted for errors either in law or in fact.

But we hold that the maxim of law, that an acquittal after a legal trial is a bar to a subsequent trial for the same offence, is not a maxim of essential justice, nor can it be applied to cases of dealing with offenders in our religious society, without consequences totally subversive of the essential objects of our religious compact. How shall the Society hold up the standard of righteousness to the nations if they justify the evil-doer in any case or under any circumstances? If Monthly Meetings through weakness or any other cause justify wrong, or fail to testify against it, how can the Society say that their testimony to the necessity of a Christian life and conversation is consistently borne?

No, in the authority of truth, judgment is to be placed upon the transgressor, and that irrespective of whether he may have been justified by his Monthly Meeting or not.

We believe in the language of a Philadelphia publication: *—

"If that (the Monthly) Meeting is derelict in its duty, the obligation rests upon its superior or Quarterly Meeting to take the case in hand, and see that the integrity of the Society is preserved by the faithful maintenance of its principles. But should that Meeting also fail to perform the part required of it, then its superior or Yearly Meeting is responsible to the whole Society that care shall be taken, and adequate means employed to prevent its existence from being endangered by the continued destruction of the bond which holds it together."

The necessity of this we think will appear clear to the unprejudiced mind of every member of our Society, if we

* "Considerations addressed to the members of the Yearly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia," p. 22.

suppose that the offence complained of were one which no one would be inclined to question. Suppose a Friend commits the offence of accepting a commission in the army, and is acquitted by a Monthly Meeting on the ground of justification,—that is, “that his defence was sufficient to exonerate him from the same,”—a Yearly and Quarterly Meeting’s Committee being present advising and enjoining against the acquittal,—would the Society be forever precluded from bearing testimony against this offender, on the ground that a man, once acquitted, cannot by “the maxims of law and justice” be again tried for the same offence after acquittal? Or suppose a complaint to be made against a member for some scandalous departure from the moral law, and he should be acquitted for want of evidence of the fact,—must this scandal never be testified against when evidence sufficient appears, because of such member having been once tried and acquitted?

It may well and pertinently be asked in view of the position taken in the “Report,” applying the maxim of the law to the discipline of the Society,—what evils and heresies may not be harbored in the bosom of the Church, which a weak Monthly Meeting or a corrupt or apostate Monthly Meeting may justify or excuse?

We come now to the seventh particular alleged to be in disregard of important principles and usages of the Society, as well as private rights, viz. :—

“*Seventh.* In disregarding the provisions of the discipline of New England Yearly Meeting, in the manner of laying down South Kingston Monthly Meeting, by Rhode Island Quarter, and attaching its members to Greenwich Monthly Meeting.”

The discipline of New England Yearly Meeting, under the head of “Discipline and Meetings for Discipline,” a title pur-

porting general provisions and general principles, provides as follows, pp. 42, 43 :—

“Agreed that no Quarterly Meeting be set up, divided into two, or discontinued, but by the Yearly Meeting; no Monthly Meeting, but by the Quarterly; no Preparative, or meeting of worship, but by the Monthly Meeting, which is the lowest meeting that has the right of disowning members. These Meetings are to continue subordinate and accountable thus: The Preparative to the Monthly, the Monthly to the Quarterly, and the Quarterly to the Yearly Meeting; so that if at any time the Yearly Meeting be dissatisfied with the proceedings of any of the said meetings, or the Quarterly Meeting with the proceedings of any of the Monthly Meetings, or the Monthly Meeting with the proceedings of any of the Preparative Meetings within its limits, such Meetings ought with readiness and meekness to render a satisfactory account accordingly.”

Here is a clear and full description of the powers of each of the Meetings which “for the regular and easy proceeding in the service and discipline of the Church have been by divine assistance set up and established, serviceable and subordinate one unto another.” These powers have been from time to time exercised in New England Yearly Meeting since its establishment, without question and without demur. Quarterly Meetings have been set up and divided into two by the Yearly Meeting, and doubtless would have been discontinued by the same authority had occasion called for such a measure;—Monthly Meetings have been set up and divided into two by the Quarterly Meetings, with as little question or demur whenever the welfare of the body has in the judgment of the Quarterly Meetings demanded those measures. And Preparative Meetings and meetings for worship have been set up, divided into two and discontinued by the Monthly Meetings.

All this has been done, and never has the power so to do by these meetings been doubted or questioned,—yet we may look in vain through the printed discipline for any provisions authorizing these proceedings except in the parts extracted above. Indeed there would seem to be no room for question on the sub-

ject. When the discipline says no Quarterly Meeting shall be set up, divided into two, or discontinued but by the Yearly Meeting, does it not in effect say that a Quarterly Meeting may be set up, divided into two or discontinued by the Yearly Meeting? and when it makes provision that no Monthly Meeting shall be set up, divided into two, or discontinued but by the Quarterly Meeting, does it not in fact provide that a Monthly Meeting may be set up, divided into two or discontinued by the Quarterly Meeting? And so of the power of the Monthly Meetings over the Preparative Meetings and meetings for worship. Such has been at all times the understanding of Friends and the practice of Friends in New England Yearly Meeting, so far as occasion has called for—and such understanding and practice have never until now been called in question.

Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting, in consequence of their general powers, had clearly the right by the discipline, at their discretion, and at such times and in such manner as they believed, in the wisdom of truth, the welfare of the Society and of the cause to require, to discontinue South Kingstown Monthly Meeting. It was also clearly within their power in pursuance of the duties assigned to Quarterly Meetings, to see that the discipline was properly exercised in their subordinate meetings, to provide that the members of that Monthly Meeting should be under the care of some Monthly Meeting; for in no other way could the regular order of the discipline be preserved.

We think it will nowhere be questioned that it is the duty of the Quarterly Meeting to see that all their members have the privilege of membership in some Monthly Meeting, and that they be under the care of some Monthly Meeting,—to enable them to accomplish marriage, to procure certificates of removal, to receive aid if poor, and to provide that they be admonished and dealt with if they offend; indeed the whole organization of the Society, in respect to the administration of its discipline, absolutely requires this.

What then is there in the discipline to limit this general

power? A clause of the discipline is quoted in the "Report" as follows:—

"When a Quarterly Meeting hath come to a judgment respecting any difference, relative to any Monthly Meeting belonging to them, and notified the same in writing to such Monthly Meeting, the said Monthly Meeting ought to submit to the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting; but if such Monthly Meeting shall not be satisfied therewith, then the Monthly Meeting may appeal to the Yearly Meeting, against the judgment and determination of the Quarterly Meeting. And if a Monthly Meeting shall *refuse* to take the advice and submit to the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting and notwithstanding *will not appeal* against the determination of the said Meeting, to the Yearly Meeting; in *such case*, the Quarterly Meeting shall be at liberty either to dissolve such Monthly Meeting, or bring the affair before the next or succeeding Yearly Meeting. And in case a Quarterly Meeting shall dissolve a Monthly Meeting, the dissolved Monthly Meeting, or any part thereof, in the name of the said Meeting, shall be at liberty to appeal to the next or succeeding Yearly Meeting, against such dissolution; but if the dissolved Monthly Meeting, or a part thereof in its behalf, *shall not appeal* to the Yearly Meeting, the Quarterly Meeting shall join the members of the said late Monthly Meeting, to such other Monthly Meeting as they may think most convenient; and until such time, shall take care that no inconvenience doth thereby ensue to the members of such dissolved meeting, respecting any branch of our discipline."

This portion of discipline was adopted, as appears by the date appended to it, in 1743. That portion which we have before quoted was adopted much later, to wit, in 1760. If, therefore, there be any doubt of the entire harmony of the two portions quoted, that last established must by all rules of proper interpretation take precedence.

We think there is no such want of harmony. What then is the true intent and meaning of the portion of discipline of 1743, last quoted? It seems to us that it was intended to apply to a particular case and state of things in a Monthly Meeting. "When a Quarterly Meeting have come to a judgment respecting any difference, relative to any Monthly Meeting belonging

to them." What does this suppose but that there exists in the Monthly Meeting a difference which they are unable to reconcile, and which requires the care of the Quarterly Meeting—a difference which obstructs the regular exercise of the discipline? In such a case disciplinary proceedings should all be calculated and intended to end that difference. And how shall this be done? The provisions of the discipline of 1743 are all aimed and intended for this end: first, "the Monthly Meeting ought to submit"—and if so, the difference is ended; or second, if this cannot be, if the stiffness of the parties to the difference prevent it, or if their honest though mistaken views cannot be overcome even by the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting, they may appeal to the Yearly Meeting, that through the labors of that body the difference may be reconciled. But if the Monthly Meeting will neither submit nor appeal, so that no way remains for harmony to be restored; rather than that they continue together in discord, the Quarterly Meeting may dissolve the Monthly Meeting—or they may carry the case to the Yearly Meeting, that that body may exercise their care to end the difference. And when the Monthly Meeting is dissolved, they may still claim the care and judgment of the Yearly Meeting, by appeal either to decide the controversy, or if possible otherwise reconcile the difference. And if they do not appeal, the Quarterly Meeting may join the members to such other Monthly Meetings as they may think most convenient.

We believe that if the power of Quarterly Meetings to lay down or dissolve Monthly Meetings were restricted in all cases to the mode pointed out by the portion of discipline of 1743, cases might happen in which serious detriment to the cause of truth and our profession would occur. For supposing a Monthly Meeting, or so considerable a number of such meeting as that they should control its proceedings, should wholly depart from our religious profession in any essential particulars; if the Quarterly Meeting to which they were subordinate were restricted, as the "Report" supposes,—the members of such

Monthly Meeting might have been in practices wholly contrary to, and subversive of our religious testimonies for a long time before the testimony of the Society could be issued against them. The Quarterly Meeting must be held, and come to a judgment and notify the same in writing to the Monthly Meeting,—the Monthly Meeting may claim time for consideration, whether they will appeal, and if finally they appeal, the time of the next or next succeeding Yearly Meeting must come round, and when they have decided, their conclusion must go back to the Quarterly Meeting before the Monthly Meeting can be laid down. Then, as the “Report” contends, they have another appeal from the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting, laying down their Monthly Meeting, and finally, after the decision of the next or next succeeding Yearly Meeting on this second appeal, and not till then, is the Quarterly Meeting authorized to join the members of the dissolved Monthly Meeting to other Monthly Meetings, that they may be dealt with and reclaimed or disowned.

These proceedings would necessarily consume several years. In the mean time members of the Society of Friends are indulging in practices wholly subversive of our religious testimonies and laying them waste,—and until the Monthly Meeting be dissolved after the decision upon their first appeal they may at the same time be exercising the powers of a Monthly Meeting—granting certificates to members or ministers, authorizing marriages and doing all other things which Monthly Meetings may do.

Surely no one can believe that the discipline would countenance, or was intended to countenance a proceeding like this. The Yearly Meeting under such circumstances could not in our view be in any sense said to be exercising that “great and weighty oversight” over the “affairs of the churches pertaining to our holy profession and Christian communion,” which by the organization of the Society they were designed to exercise. Nor could an affirmative answer be given by the Monthly or Quar-

terly Meetings to the query—"do you take due care regularly to deal with all offenders, in the spirit of meekness and wisdom, without partiality or unnecessary delay?"

The position taken in the "Report" is that in the laying down of South Kingstown Monthly Meeting and immediately annexing its members to that of Greenwich, "important principles and usages of the Society, as well as private rights, have been disregarded."

Green Street Monthly Meeting, a constituent Monthly Meeting of Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting, at a meeting held at the regular time and place, on the 26th of 4th mo., 1827, adopted certain measures subversive of the subordination and order provided for by the discipline, although such measures were remonstrated against by many members of that Monthly Meeting; and although a Committee of Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting appointed to visit its Monthly Meetings protested against the measure.

At Philadelphia Quarterly Meeting, held in the 5th mo., 1827, the next succeeding the Monthly Meeting at Green Street, where the disorderly measures were adopted, the Quarterly Meeting proceeded to lay down Green Street Monthly Meeting, and by the same minute to annex the members to another Monthly Meeting, without ascertaining if the Monthly Meeting would appeal from the conclusion of the Quarterly Meeting, thus dissolving the Monthly Meeting, and at the same time appointed a committee to unite with and assist the Monthly Meeting to which they were annexed in such care and labor as may be requisite. The minute of the Quarterly Meeting laying down Green Street Monthly Meeting is as follows:

"It appears by the foregoing report, as well as by information received from Green Street Monthly Meeting, that, notwithstanding all the labor extended, it has cast off the subordination due to this Meeting, and rejected its authority; and in other respects has clearly manifested that the members are not in a capacity satisfactorily to transact the business of the

Monthly Meeting; it is therefore concluded that the said Monthly Meeting be dissolved; and in order that our discipline may be regularly maintained and supported in its various branches, it is hereby directed that the members of Green Street Meeting be united to the Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia for the Northern district; and the following Friends are appointed to unite with and assist the last named Meeting in such care and labor as may be requisite, (viz.: T. S. and others:) and they are desired to inform the members of Green Street Meeting of this conclusion, and to request that they will deliver to them the books and papers of that Meeting.”—Foster’s Report, Vol. 2, pp. 489, 490.

The rectitude and propriety of these proceedings were never questioned by Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, nor was it ever held by that meeting that there was in them any disregard of important principles or usages of the Society or of private rights—and as stated in the “Report,” we are one people the world over. With what propriety then can New England Yearly Meeting be called upon to concede, that a measure which in one Yearly Meeting is right and proper and in accordance with the “principles of religious duty and Christian doctrine, of civil liberty and constitutional right common to us all,” can have so far changed its character as to be in disregard of such principles when adopted in another Yearly Meeting, even if there be a reasonable doubt as to the meaning of a clause of the discipline of the latter, and its applicability to the case which relates simply to the manner of proceeding in the laying down of a Monthly Meeting and annexing its members to other Monthly Meetings?

But even supposing the article of discipline of 1743 to be the only authority for the laying down of a Monthly Meeting by a Quarterly Meeting,—which is by no means conceded,—there are many grounds upon which it may be properly contended that in the case of South Kingstown this discipline was substantially complied with. A committee of the Quarterly Meeting was appointed to advise and assist this Monthly Meeting. They visited it and examined into its state and they came to a judgment respecting it. If it be con-

tended that this was not a judgment come to by the Quarterly Meeting, is this certain?—May it not be substantially so?—Is there no discretion in meetings for discipline by which their powers may be delegated on proper occasions? May not circumstances exist, in which it would be quite allowable for a Quarterly Meeting to clothe a Committee with power to judge and act for them?—circumstances, in which such power would be highly conducive to the welfare of the body, and the support of order and our religious principles and testimonies? We can readily conceive of such circumstances.

Suppose a Monthly Meeting in a state requiring the care of the Quarterly Meeting—and facts existing in it, in which delay would bring suffering to the cause—which facts were not fully understood by the Quarterly Meeting. May they not separate a Committee and give them authority to go into the Monthly Meeting, examine the facts, and in the light of Truth give such judgment in the name of the Quarterly Meeting as they might find necessary?—and in effect, if not in form, would not such judgment be the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting,—more especially if such judgment should afterwards be confirmed by the Quarterly Meeting?

The discipline of New England Yearly Meeting on the subject of appeals, provides, that the superior Meetings to which the appeal is made,

“Is to take said appeal into consideration and determine thereon by a Committee to be appointed for that purpose.”

The Superior Meeting determines the appeal. But they do it by a Committee. This is a case of delegated power, where the Committee's acts are clearly the acts of the Meeting, and are so provided to be, by the discipline. Again, the powers of the Meeting for Sufferings are delegated powers. They act on behalf of the Yearly Meeting, and their acts, within their powers, are the acts of the Yearly Meeting in effect. They are “in general to represent this (the Yearly) Meeting in all

cases where the reputation and interest of Truth and our religious society are concerned, provided they do not meddle with matters of faith and discipline not already determined in the Yearly Meeting."

Another instance of delegated power is to be found authorized by the discipline, which requires the Meeting for Sufferings

To keep "records of all their proceedings, which are annually to be laid before this (the Yearly) Meeting, or such Committee as it may appoint to inspect or view the same."

The judgment of such Committee may clearly be taken as the judgment of the Yearly Meeting respecting the proceedings of the Meeting for Sufferings.

South Kingstown Monthly Meeting had received in writing the judgment of a Committee of the Quarterly Meeting appointed to advise them,—on its behalf. Is it then "an assumption," as the "Report" holds, "which would totally change the long established practice of the Society," to consider this judgment in effect if not in form as the judgment of the Quarterly Meeting? The long established practice of the Society, is, as we have seen, in favor of the delegation of the powers of Meetings to Committees in cases of appeals. In such cases, in New England Yearly Meeting, and we apprehend in all the American Yearly Meetings, and that of London except where faith or doctrine is involved in the appeal—the judgment of the Committee is the judgment of the Meeting, unless it can be shown that the Committee on the appeal have refused the parties a fair hearing, or have otherwise transcended or abused their powers.

South Kingstown Monthly Meeting did neither submit to the judgment communicated to them by a Committee appointed to act on behalf of the Quarterly Meeting, nor appeal, and were thereupon laid down.

We think therefore that it is an uncharitable assumption of the "Report" that this transaction was in disregard of "important principles and usages of the Society or of private rights."

In effect and substantially it was in accordance with the discipline. If it differed from it, which we do not admit, it differed only in form and not in substance ; and it cannot and ought not to be stamped as a departure from the “principles of religious duty or Christian doctrine”—or from any principles of “civil liberty or constitutional right,” applicable to the disciplinary proceedings of our Society, or “common to us all,” as members of the Society.

We proceed to consider the eighth particular wherein the “Report” charges a disregard of important principles and usages of our Society and private rights, viz. :

“Eighth. In the manner in which the members of the Quarterly Meeting’s Committee interfered to produce a separation in Swanzey Monthly Meeting.”

And here our Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting have fallen into an error, quite important to a true understanding of the state of things at Swanzey Monthly Meeting, when the separation took place. They state in substance that the person who had for some years previous acted as clerk, was acknowledged by both “parties” to have been in that station when the Meeting adjourned the month before.* New England Yearly Meeting do not and never have so acknowledged. And in the “Report” itself, p. 17, speaking of the Monthly Meeting held the month before the separation, our friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting state that the Meeting which they style the larger body,

“Assert—that when the names of the Friends, who, by the advice of the Yearly and Quarterly Meetings’ Committees, were reported to that Monthly Meeting for clerk and overseers, were so proposed in the Meeting, the reports were fully united with by the large body of the members

* “Report,” p. 36.

of the Meeting, and that the clerk refused to record the clearly expressed sense of the meeting, though advised to do so by the Yearly Meeting's Committee."

At the adjournment of this meeting, then, it cannot be said that Friends acknowledged this person to be in the station of clerk. The Monthly Meeting had concluded upon another person for clerk, and the only reason why this conclusion was not recorded was, because the person who had theretofore acted as clerk, and who was at the table, refused to do his duty.

When the Meeting next assembled, then, it is perfectly clear that the former clerk could have no pretension to be in that station, unless he claimed it in consequence of his own neglect and refusal to do his duty the month before. He however took a seat at the table, and undertook to act, claiming still to be clerk, having refused to make a true record of the appointment by the former meeting of another person who was then concluded on.

To show how Friends of New England Yearly Meeting view this matter, and what they acknowledge and what they deny in relation to it, we make the following extract from a report made to the Yearly Meeting, in 1845, by a committee of the representatives from the several Quarterly Meetings, except Rhode Island, to whom had been referred the questions arising from the fact of representatives from two bodies appearing there as representatives from Rhode Island Quarterly Meeting, viz. :—

" We are also united in judgment, that at said Monthly Meeting, in the 7th mo., Thomas Wilbur was bound by the discipline and good order of our Society to record the clearly expressed sense of the Monthly Meeting appointing David Shove as its clerk, in accordance with the advice of the Yearly Meeting's Committee; and by refusing to do so, so far departed from the discipline and usages of our Society, as well as from the subordination of inferior to superior meetings, and individuals to the body, as to disqualify him from any longer holding the office of clerk of Swanzey Monthly Meeting; and said office thereupon became vacant. And it is further our sense and judgment, that at Swanzey Monthly Meeting, in the 8th mo., David Shove was rightfully the clerk, having been thereto duly

appointed, and was, remained, and is, the only properly constituted clerk of Swanzey Monthly Meeting."

This report and these conclusions were accepted and made by New England Yearly Meeting, in 1845. Both parties, then, do not agree that the clerk who had been in office remained in office when the meeting adjourned the month before. New England Yearly Meeting distinctly deny it, and assert the contrary. They assert that at the Monthly Meeting next before the separation, viz., in the 7th mo., the office of clerk became vacant, in consequence of the former clerk refusing to do his duty and thereby becoming disqualified.

At the next Monthly Meeting, viz., in the 8th mo., to the clerk duly appointed, viz., David Shove, the representatives from the preparative meetings reported; with him the Quarterly Meeting's Committee united; him they acknowledged, and to him they presented their minute of appointment from the Quarterly Meeting, and the same was read by him and minuted by him. With the body whose clerk he was, to wit, Swanzey Monthly Meeting, their duties lay, and with that body they performed them.

We do not perceive in all this any disregard of important principles or usages of our Society, or of private rights, but on the contrary a steady maintenance of both.

We have now briefly passed in review the eight prominent particulars in which we are accused by Friends of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, of departure from discipline and of disregard of the rights of our former members. The subject is a painful one. It is painful to perceive how far the honest endeavors of Friends faithfully to uphold and maintain our Christian order may be misunderstood. But we still hope that the restoring influence of the Gospel of peace, may so abound as that these misunderstandings may be reconciled.

The true unity and fellowship of the members of that body

of which Christ Jesus our Lord is the alone and holy Head is precious. It is that into which the truth leads all the truly devoted and humble believers. It is our sincere and fervent desire that all who make the high and holy profession into which we are called, may seek more and more diligently to be found in this precious unity—the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. For this end individual faithfulness, daily bearing the cross of Christ, humility before the Lord and watchfulness unto prayer are indispensable.

If any man will come after me, let him take up his daily cross and follow me. As this is our blessed experience we shall witness an increase of this precious unity, we shall be drawn nearer one unto another in the love of the gospel, remembering the exhortation of the apostle, “Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”—1 Peter ii, 1–5.

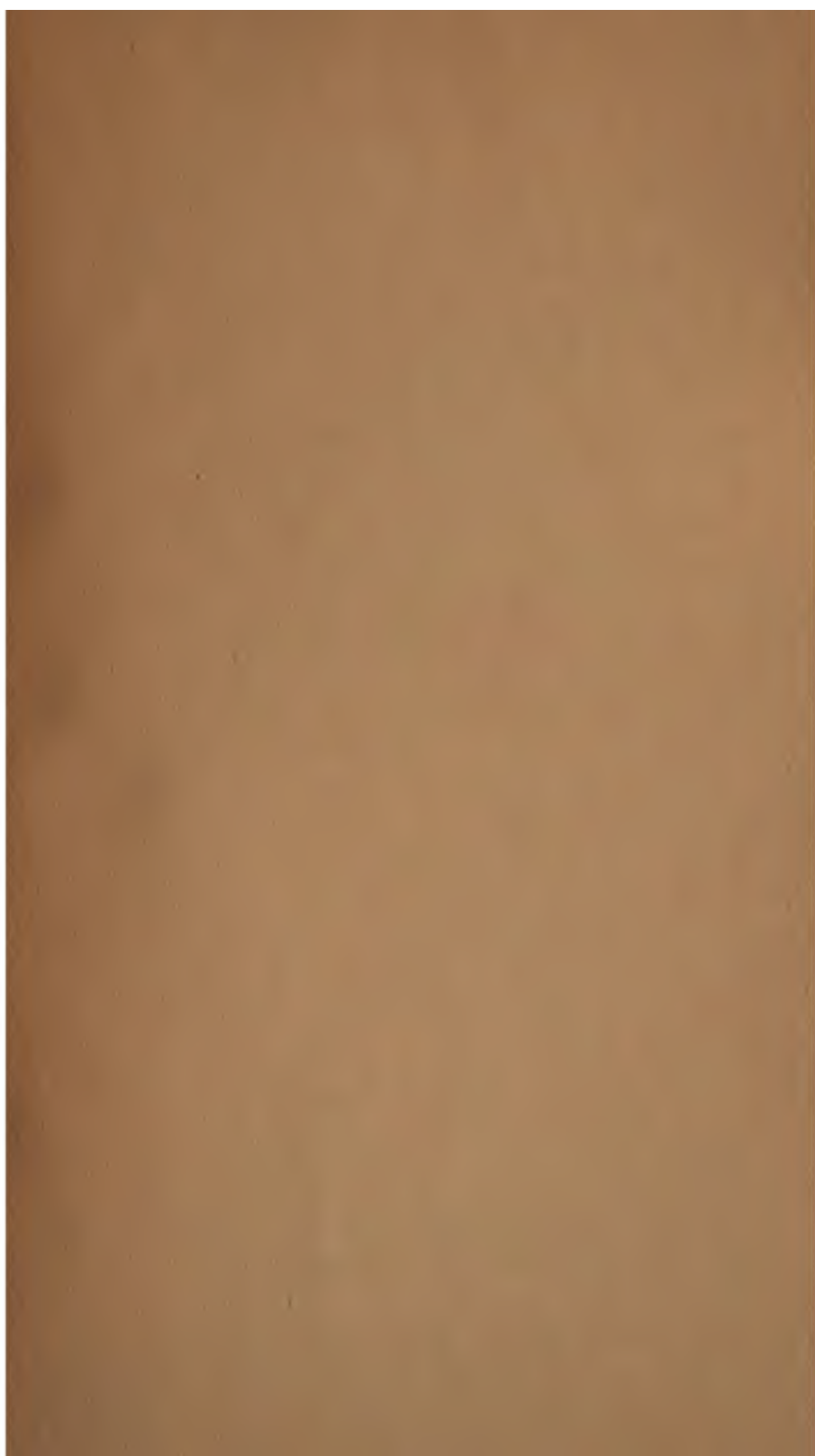
At a Meeting for Sufferings of the Yearly Meeting of Friends for New England, held at Providence, 4th of 2d mo., 1852.

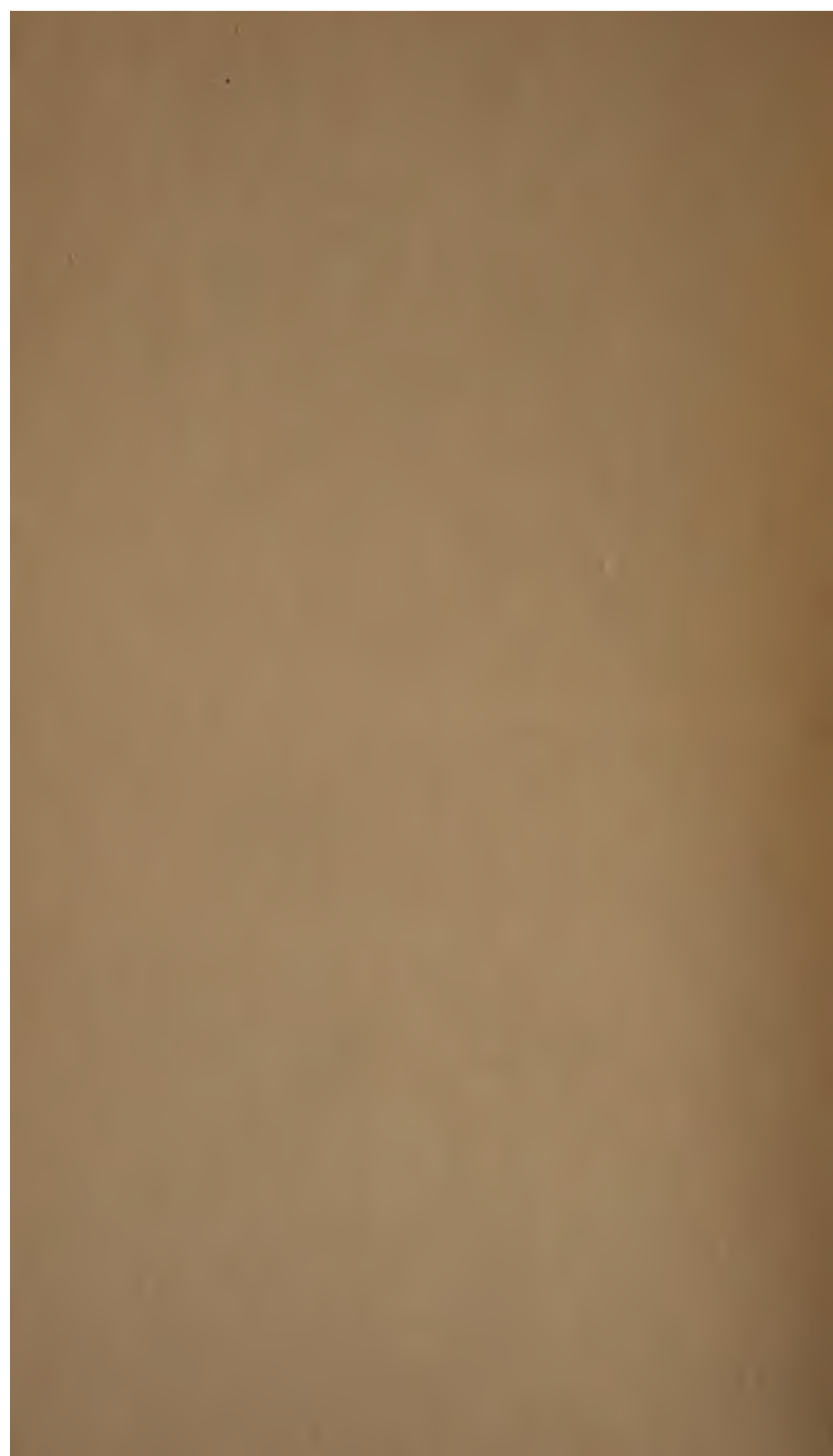
The foregoing essay in vindication of the Disciplinary proceedings of New England Yearly Meeting, was at this time read, and being deliberately considered, was approved and adopted, and it is concluded that the same be published; and the Clerk is directed to append thereto a copy of this minute, and sign it on behalf of this Meeting.

SAMUEL BOYCE, CLERK.











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A vindication of the disciplinary p
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